

Planning Your Professional Wardrobe

► Learning to look and feel good about yourself and your appearance begins with recognizing, understanding, and accepting who you are today.

A nice appearance is an investment in you. It gives you confidence and enhances how you want others to perceive you. Clothing speaks volumes about you whether you are aware of it or not. Your appearance reflects how you feel about yourself and it may be the only impression a stranger gets to see. Remember, first impressions last! Understanding and accepting yourself is the most important aspect of a positive image. Everyone isn't a size 0, 2, 4 or 6. Garment size is not the issue, but body image is. Take a look around. There are people of different sizes, shapes, weights and heights; you are not alone. Learning to look and feel good about yourself and your appearance begins with recognizing, understanding, and accepting who you are today. Tomorrow's success begins now!

Your Professional Image

A nice appearance is also an investment in your career. Although it will not take the place of education or competence in your job, it will enhance those requirements and increase your chances for getting ahead in the business world.

An interviewer's decision to hire a job applicant is usually made within the first 30 seconds of an interview, and it's based mostly on your appearance. The right look can make a person look more professional and not only increase their chances of being hired, but possibly increase their starting salary as well.

First, there is more to dressing right for the job than just having a sense of what looks right for you. There's more to consider than the color of your complexion, the shape of your body, or the kind of personality you have. Consideration for the kind of company you want to work for, the kind of people you will work with, the kind of work you are seeking, and where you would like to see yourself in the future of the company, are also important.

Next, plan your professional wardrobe with these goals in mind. Remind yourself, if you're smart enough to do the job, you're smart enough to dress right for it.



Figure 1. Diverse Professionals. iStock image by monkeybusinessimages

Communicating through Clothes

What statement do you want to send? What role do you want to play? Some people send out the wrong message unintentionally. What does your dress appearance say about you? "I don't care" or "I'm not organized." Believe that clothing communicates facts about you whether you are aware of it or not. First impressions stay with people for a long time. On the office grapevine, clothes speak louder than words. Know how to use clothing to establish yourself in whatever role you want to play in life. It will help you win that role much quicker. Dress for the job above you or the one you would like to have to let others know you want to advance.

Planning Your Wardrobe

A good wardrobe should:

- Cover your life and your body.
- Comfort your purse.
- Bail you out of most emergencies.
- Bring out your best self.
- Boost your soul.
- Beam out messages of approval from others around you.

A good professional wardrobe should:

- Work nonstop!
- Continually be in fashion.
- Take the minimum amount of time and effort.
- Be varied and versatile, and make you feel and look good.
- Be thought of as an investment in your career and your future.



Figure 2. Simple, professional outfit with a bit of flare. iStock image by Kiuikson

Tips on Professional Dress

Think classic styles that are never outdated!

- **Quality:** Buy the best you can afford. Shop the sales, thrift, or consignment shops.
- **Body:** Choose clothing that compliments your body and enhances your skin tone.
- **Fit:** Choose clothes that fit with ease — not too tight or too big.
- **Grooming:** Shoes, hair, face, and hands should be neat, clean and appealing.

NOTE: Always dress conservatively for interviews.

Ways to Dress: How do you dress?

- **Flare**
 - Creative artsy: Express your artistic flair
- **Feminine**
 - Basic feminine: Wear an angora sweater
- **Sexy–Alluring**
 - Basic sexy: Wear short-fitted garments
 - Creative sexy: Wear long-fitted garments with side slits or hugging slacks

Wardrobe Engineering

1. Benefits of a Well-Planned Wardrobe

- You can project your best self-image
- You can save money
- You can gain flexibility

2. Developing a Well-Planned Wardrobe

- Know what apparel you already have
- Group your clothes by:
 - Clothing you wear often
 - Clothing you wear occasionally
 - Clothing that needs repair or cleaning
 - Clothing not worn in the past year or two

3. Distinguish Wants from Needs

A “want” is a desire for something that gives you satisfaction.

A “need” is something you must have for your continued existence or survival. It is necessary for your basic protection, modesty, comfort, or livelihood.

4. Choosing Accessories

Use accessories to your advantage, such as:

- Footwear
- Handbags
- Headwear
- Scarves
- Handkerchiefs
- Belts
- Gloves
- Eyewear
- Hosiery
- Jewelry

5. Develop a Total Future Plan

- Your basic garments
- Basic apparel
- Investment dressing

- Your basic garments
- Extenders (additional clothing you desire after building your wardrobe)
- Seasonless clothing
- Write down your plan

6. Consider your Resources

- Resources (end of season sales, consignment and thrift shops)
- Sewing as an option

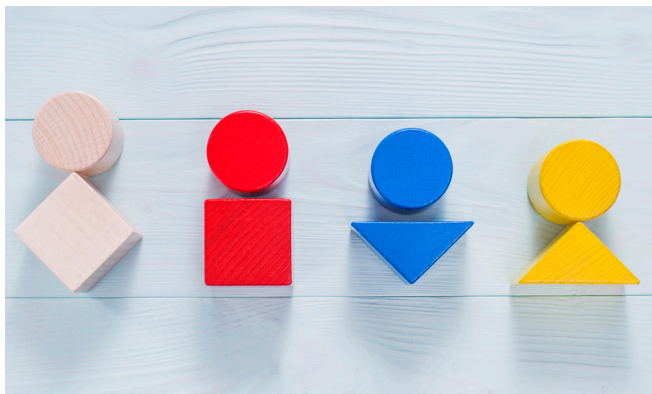


Figure 3. Simplified Body Types. iStock image by Radachynskyi

► **Dressing for your body type is key to looking great in a professional wardrobe.**

Check your Silhouette

There are four main image types. Which one are you? (Wardrobe Recommendations)

1. Sporty-Casual

- Basic Sporty—A lined, structured blazer
- Creative Sporty—An unlined, constructed jacket

2. Classic-Elegant

- Basic Classic—A tailored skirt or pleated pants
- Creative Classic—A culottes skirt or cropped pants

3. Exotic-Dramatic

- Basic Exotic—One strong piece as a signature
- Creative Exotic—Strong rich garments

4. Arty-Off-Beat

- Basic Arty—Colorful & patterned garments

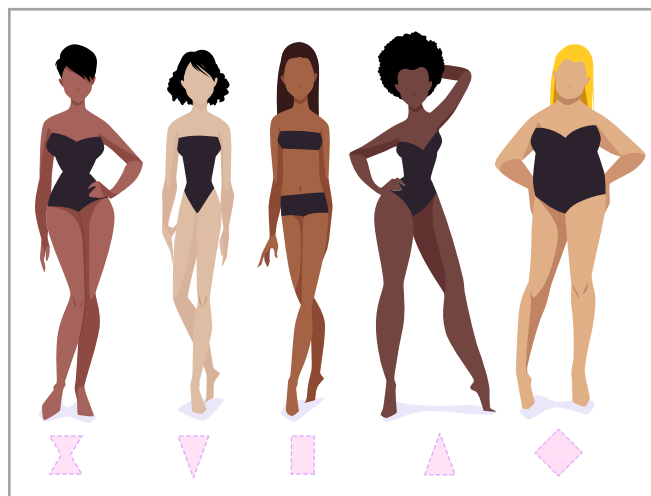


Figure 4. Body types for women: hourglass, inverted, rectangular, triangle, & diamond. Adjusted Stock image by tigrilla

How to Dress Your Body Type for Women

Hourglass Body Type

- Hourglass body types usually have busts and hips of equal measurements, smaller waists, and well-defined shoulder lines. Backs are usually broader and body appears balanced.
- **Garment Selection:** Most garments look nice on hourglass bodies; however, be aware of bodily proportions in the bust and hip areas. Try dresses with slim lines and waist definitions.

NOTE: Persons with wider hips should wear softly draped skirts and dresses. Wear styles that compliment the waist and avoid tightly fitted garments.

Inverted Body Type

- Inverted body types have larger busts, broader backs, longer waists, slender hips and legs, and larger waists.
- **Garment Selection:** Ideal clothing should be tailored straight suits with little waist definition; raglan or straight-sleeved tops worn on the outside of pants or skirts; slacks or skirts that are softly tailored with wide pleats or slightly gathered; and dresses that emphasize the lower half of the body.

NOTE: Double-breasted blazers enhance bodily proportions. Avoid wearing shoulder pads and tightly fitted garments.

Rectangular Body Type

- Rectangular body types include persons with little or no waist definitions; similar width in shoulders, waists, hips and thighs; and straight bodily lines.
- **Garment Selection:** Try suits with little waist definition; blazers or jackets that are slightly loose; slacks with a flat front; skirts on the bias, flared or pleated; V-neck, cowl, dolman, or raglan sleeved tops; and dresses that are straight, high, or have a low waist.

NOTE: Belts are your best friend.

Triangle Body Type

- Triangular body types usually have smaller busts and shoulders with a clearly defined low waist, and wider hips and/or thighs.
- **Garment Selection:** Ideal garments should be tailored suits that fit closely to the body and define the waist; light or bright colored tops; straight, slightly wide, or flared-legged pants; A-lined, flared, or softly draped skirts; and dresses that blouse, have ruching detail at waist, or are A-lined or slightly flared.

NOTE: Small shoulder pads enhance bodily proportions and most bias cut garments are not as appealing.

Diamond Body Type

- Diamond body types have a wider midriff and waist, narrower shoulders, hips, thighs, and an average to small bust size.
- **Garment Selection:** Ideal clothing for this body type includes wide-legged pants in soft draping fabrics and knits; skirts in softly draped fabrics or knits; dresses that are straight, swing, and circular in softly draped fabrics or knits; and tops in soft and whimsy fabrics in V-neck or asymmetrical styles.

NOTE: Minimize midriff, waist, and high hip areas. Emphasize shoulder area. Lead attention inward at waist and up to face. Fill out shoulders with shoulder pads or puffed shoulders.

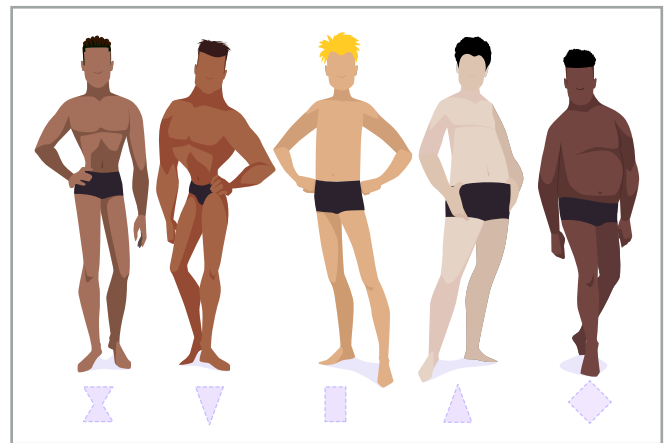


Figure 5. Body types for men: hourglass, inverted, rectangular, triangle, & diamond. Adjusted Stock image by tigrilla

How to Dress Your Body Type for Men

Hourglass Body Type

- Hourglass shaped males usually have a chest and hips of equal measurements, a smaller waist, well-defined shoulder lines, and possibly a broader back. The body appears to be balanced.
- **Garment Selection:** Most garments look nice; however, be aware of bodily proportions in the chest and hip areas. Suits with slim lines and a slight waist definition are best.

NOTE: Wear styles that compliment both height and weight. This will enhance your polished image.

Inverted Body Type

- The inverted male body type typically has a larger chest, broader back, and a longer and larger waist with slender hips and legs.
- **Garment Selection:** Suits should be tailored straight with little waist definition; shirts with button down collars for casual wear; shirts should be loose with a straight-edged hem worn on outside of slacks; slacks are softly tailored with wide pleats; and blazers worn with a little waist definition.

NOTE: Double-breasted blazers enhance bodily proportions; however, avoid shoulder pads.

Rectangular Body Type

- Rectangular body types have little or no waist definitions. Their bodies have a similar width in shoulders, waists, hips, and thighs with straight bodily lines.

- NOTE:** Belts are your best friend. Use them!

- Triangle body types have smaller chests and shoulders with a clearly defined waist, wider hips and/or thighs, and possibly a lower waist.

- NOTE:** Small shoulder pads enhance bodily proportions.

- Diamond-shaped body types tend to have a wider midriff and waist, narrower shoulders, hips, and thighs with an average to smaller chest, but not always!
- **Garment Selection:** Slacks are wide legged in softly draped fabrics such as worsted wool, linen and silk; shirts in soft fabrics such as polished cotton, handkerchief linen and silk.

NOTE: Minimize midriff, waist, and high hip areas. Emphasize shoulder area. Lead attention inward at waist and up to face. Fill out shoulders with minimum shoulder padding.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal green ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Wardrobe Inventory Chart

Planning Your Professional Wardrobe UNP-0003

Name: _____

Date: _____

Clothing Types	Clothes I Have	Clothes I Need	Condition (Good, Bad, Repair)	Does it Compliment Me (Style, Color & Fit)	Action to Take (Keep, Share, Discard)
Dresses					
Skirts					
Suits					
Blazers/Jackets					
Dress Shirts/Blouses					
Pants					
Shorts					
Casual Shirts					
Sweaters					
Coats					
Shoes					
Boots					
Athletic Attire					
Under Garments					
Socks					
Sleepwear					
Hats					
Gloves					
Neckwear/Scarves					
Belts					
Purses & such					
Jewelry					
Work Clothes					
Formal Attire					

Wardrobe Planning Chart

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Name: _____

Season _____

Color Palette: _____

Basic Color Scheme: _____

Cool-Winter/Summer or Warm-Fall/Spring

Fall/Winter or Spring/Summer

Colors Most Preferable

Activities	Basic Apparel	Accessories	Needs & Priorities	Extenders (Additional items you want, not need)
School				
Job				
Religious & Special Events				
Social Activities				
Leisure				
Lounging & Sleeping				
Outer Clothing				
Other				

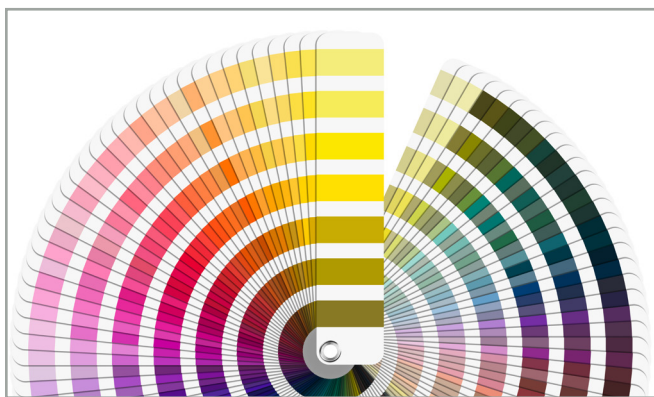


Figure 6. Color swatch wheel. iStock image catalby

► When thinking about color in your wardrobe there are a few points to consider including skin tone, color schemes and seasons.

Guide to Ensure Color Becomingness

Color and Skin Tones

Color should be chosen so that the wearer remains the center of interest; not dominated by any color or color combination. Most individuals can wear just about any color — provided they select the shade, clarity, intensity, and amount that is flattering to them.

- Cool colors are more becoming on skin tones with blue undertones.
- Warm colors are more becoming on skin tones with golden undertones.

Those with deeper undertones have an advantage since their striking coloring easily remains dominant.

Those with olive or pale undertones should be cautious about wearing blended hues such as blue-green, magenta and yellow-green. These are the most difficult colors to wear because they may draw an unpleasant cast to skin.

Be careful about choosing brighter intensities of hues that are similar to the hues in your own coloring. The rich tones of the American Indian, African American, and vivid brunettes are enhanced by shades of warm colors such as brown, reds, rust, golds, and warm yellows. Colors found in the earthly shades during autumn and spring are also ideal.

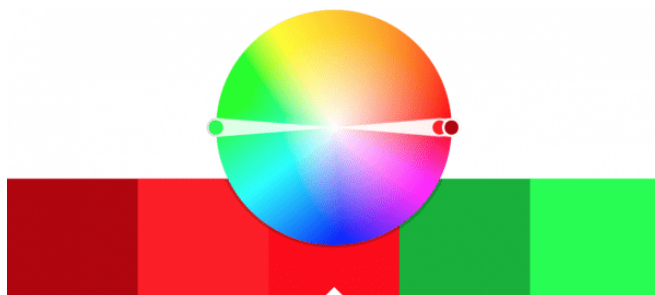
European Americans and most Hispanics with light skin tones and blue undertones are most becoming in colors like true blue, true red, vivid greens, pinks, and purples. Colors found in the earthly shades during winter and summer are ideal.

Colors in the Wardrobe

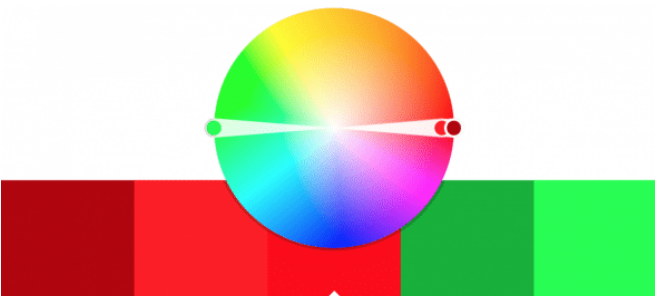
To dress effectively, one must know the shades, clarities, values, and amount of color that works best, in addition to following color coordination rules.

- Everyone may wear dark colors like black and navy for most practical purposes.
- White brings out all of the color in the skin.
- Yellow reflects its color upon the hair, eyes, and skin.
- Colors light in value increase the apparent size of the wearer.
- Dark colors decrease the apparent size of the wearer.
- Colors used with gray, black, or white appear clearer.
- Colors may be emphasized in repetition (brown emphasizes brown eyes).
- Colors should be worn in pleasing combinations.

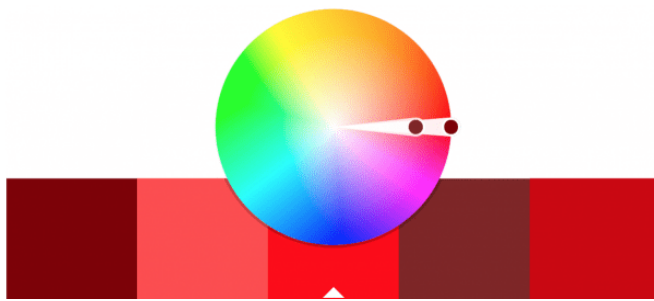
Color Schemes



Complementary: Colors directly across from each other on the color wheel.



Analogous: Colors that fall side-by-side on the color wheel.



Monochromatic: Colors in the same shade or hue.



Triadic: Three colors in equal distance from one another on the color wheel.

Colors by Seasons

People's skin tones can be WARM or COOL. WARM refers to golden under skin tone; whereas COOL refers to blue under skin tone.

Most people will fall clearly into one category or the other, with the exception of true olive skin, which can be mistaken as warm but may actually be cool.

The Cool Seasons

Winter



Summer



The Warm Seasons

Autumn



Spring



Figure 11. Colors are divided into four categories that correspond with the four seasons.

The Cool Seasons

- Winter: Black, Sapphire Blue, Clear Red, Emerald Green, Deep Lemon
- Summer: Charcoal Gray, Baby Blue, Rose, Apple Green, Light Lemon

The Warm Seasons

- Autumn: Dark Brown, Teal, Orange, Olive Green, Gold
- Spring: Warm Beige, Turquoise, Shrimp, Lime, Bright Yellow

Colors that Compliment Your Face

When dressing professionally, colors that compliment your skin tone should be used close to your face.

- **Ladies:** You can wear a blouse in a color that compliments your skin tone with your suit.
- **Gentlemen:** Try wearing a nice tie in your complimentary colors to blend with your shirt and suit.

The Color Palette

Winter



Summer



Autumn



Spring



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